

NATIONAL ACTIVE & RETIRED FEDERAL EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

MIDWEST CITY/DEL CITY
CHAPTER 946
(OKLAHOMA)



CHAPTER NEWSLETTER
Volume 38, Number 3
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MARCH 23RD MEETING PROGRAM

State Sen. Ron Sharp, (R-Dist. 17), will cover events and issues being addressed at the Capitol, with special emphasis on public education in Oklahoma. Sen. Sharp is a Ph.D. and retired secondary teacher.

News Alert: Register now for NARFE's conference, FedCon18, in Jacksonville, FL, Aug. 26-28. Early Bird Special pricing ends Mar. 31st. For more info, see www.NARFE.org or NARFE Magazine.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: By Ron Cannefax

Our February luncheon meeting was canceled due to the bad weather that week and being cold and rainy that Friday morning, plus the fact we had under twenty committed for the meeting. We also had several members cancel out the day before the meeting. So now we look forward to scheduling an IRS representative sometime in the near future to tell us what to look for in preparing the 2018 returns due in April 2019. We need to be prepared for the changes coming under the new Tax Reform passed recently which will apply to the 2018 tax year. We had hoped to have Michelle Thompson, with OK Tax Commission, be with us for our March meeting, but she has prior commitments for March 23rd and could not be with us. She did bring some information packets for our use, and the following is what she was going to cover during the February meeting.

Filing Tips for 2017 Oklahoma Tax Returns:

1. New Filing Requirement for Oklahoma residents. Schedule 511 instructions on page 3.
2. New Subtraction – The FERS Annuity supplement may be deductible on Schedule 511-A, Line 3. See 511 instructions on page 14.
3. New Subtraction – Taxable state or local income tax refunds may be deductible on Schedule 511-A, line 13. See 511 instructions on page 14.
4. If you filed an original or amended return within the 6 months and were due a refund, do not use the same routing and checking or savings account number for your 2017 refund. If you use the same account within 6 months, you will receive your refund on a debit card.



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for all state workers. The West Virginia teachers strike is over, but Oklahoma and Arizona may be next.

In Oklahoma you can make more money working at a gas station than as a teacher. The average annual income for a high school teacher is \$42,460. Many make much less. Larry Cagle, who teaches at Edison Preparatory School in Tulsa, says he makes just \$34,500 a year working for one of the best schools in the state. Inspired by the collective bargaining in West Virginia, he is organizing a group of Oklahoma teachers to begin a strike of their own.

About 200 students walked out of John Marshall Mid-High School recently to raise gun violence awareness. Oklahoma City Public Schools backed the demonstration, organized by eighth-graders Jaime Richardson and Paisley Lonebear in response to last month's deadly school shooting in Florida.

5. Oklahoma taxpayers, especially retirees, should use the Sales Tax Deduction Calculator of the IRS Publication 600, State and Local General Sales Taxes, which are both provided at www.irs.gov to help you determine the amount of optional state and local sales tax you can claim on Schedule A of Form 1040. Oklahoma retirees generally pay more in Sales Tax annually than State Income Taxes paid because of the retirement exclusions. For example: the sales tax rate for Oklahoma just went up to 4.125%, and if you live out in East OKC within Pottawatomie County, the county sales tax rate is 1.495%, plus the sales tax rate of 4.5%. Consumers in this location pay 10.12 cents on every dollar spent around that area or online. The highest Oklahoma income tax rate is 5%, **SO IT MAY BENEFIT YOU TO MAKE THE ELECTION TO WRITE OFF YOUR STATE SALES TAXES INSTEAD OF YOUR STATE INCOME TAXES PAID.**

The main benefits for Oklahoma taxpayers from the 2018 federal Tax Reform are:

1. Extension of exclusion from Gross income of discharge of Qualified Principal Residence indebtedness was extended for tax year 2017.

2. Extension of Mortgage Insurance Premiums treated as Qualified Residence interest on the Federal Form 1040 schedule A (Itemized Deductions) was extended for tax year 2017.

3. Extension of Above-the-Line Deduction for Qualified Tuition and related expenses, Federal Form 1040, Line 34 (Adjustments Section of the 1040) was extended for tax year 2017.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT: By James Crowder

The largest union for teachers in Oklahoma gave lawmakers in the cash-strapped state an April 1 deadline to approve pay raises for some of the lowest-paid educators in the country or face a shutdown of public schools, its president announced on March 7. The move came a day after teachers in West Virginia ended a nine-day strike that closed schools statewide, with officials approving a 5% pay raise

Oklahomans for Criminal Justice Reform has called for more action from state officials. This group, which was behind a 2016 state question letting Oklahomans reclassify drug possession as a misdemeanor, said on March 7 that criminal justice reforms coming this legislative session won't cut it. Oklahomans for Criminal Justice Reform Chairman Kris Steele said the sentencing and parole reforms promoted this month by the governor, Republican leaders and district attorneys have been watered down from a task force's recommendations made last year.

Is "Prosperity Policy" a No-Brainer? As Oklahoma lawmakers continue to search for new revenues to avoid crippling budget cuts and make desperately needed investments, they seem to have few easy options. But what if there was a tax break costing the state over \$100 million every year and benefiting just 1% of households? What if nearly 2/3 of that benefit went to fewer than 1,000 households making over \$1 million a year, while the vast majority of Oklahomans, those making under \$100,000 a year, shared less than 10%? End the capital gains tax break. Support **SB1086** to repeal the capital gains tax deduction.

In a closed door meeting the first part of March, fellow House Republicans designated Speaker Charles McCall to lead their caucus again in 2019. Details of the vote were not revealed and McCall's office declined requests for comment following the noon-time vote. Several Republican House members are known to have challenged McCall, including Rep. Chad Caldwell of Enid, Rep. Charles Ortega of Altus, and Rep. Tommy Hardin of Madill. McCall has taken some criticism because of his inability to muster the ¾ majorities needed to pass revenue bills in the House, and from fiscal hard-liners who oppose such proposals altogether.

Several Oklahoma officials are pushing to take advantage of an opportunity the Trump administration gave states to cut down on Medicaid enrollment. The administration opened the program to waivers, which allow states to make changes to their own Medicaid administrations that would have been illegal in the past. One of the changes gaining the most traction in Oklahoma is the addition of a work requirement. Oklahoma should avoid the temptation to pass new Medicaid restrictions. Stop proposed Medicaid work restrictions.

A bill its author said gives school districts the option of incorporating "consent and healthy relationship education" into professional development, and to develop "rape or sexual assault response" procedures made it through the Oklahoma House of Representatives on March 7. The bill was approved despite objections from conservatives who said it could lead to the distribution of contraceptives to minors and promotion of "LGBTQ and transgenderism."

"Our focus is to focus on the people who are sick." Debate continues over medical marijuana in Oklahoma. In June, Oklahoma voters will head to the polls to vote on **SQ 788**. Right now, there is debate at the State Capitol to see if the ballot initiative has enough support from voters. "If the voters want it, God be with them," said August Rivera with Oklahomans Against 788.

Legislative prayers have sparked some controversy and some changes are being considered. Oklahoma's House Speaker has said he plans changes to a program in which pastors deliver prayers and sermons to legislators amid criticism from interfaith leaders and some members that non-Christians are being denied an opportunity to participate. House Speaker Charles McCall said the plan is to align the program with those of the U.S. House, which has a chaplain who delivers a daily prayer and also coordinates a guest minister program for visiting clergy.

Oklahoma Police Pension offices are searched as agents take the next step in embezzlement investigation. The executive director of the Oklahoma Police Pension and Retirement System has

come under investigation after an anonymous tip. Steven K. Snyder is suspected of misusing thousands of dollars from operational funds on personal travel and other things.

The Three-Year DACA Border Security Deal was blocked in the Senate. A temporary extension of a key Obama-era immigration program was blocked recently in the Senate as lawmakers struggled to break a stalemate. Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) tried to pass legislation that would extend the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program for three years while providing \$7.6 billion in border security funding. Congress must pass the Dream Act to protect young Oklahomans and our economy.

NARFE at the National Level

By James Crowder

This is a timely message from NARFE President Richard G. Thissen:

“Legislators need to keep hearing from NARFE members about the unfair targeting of federal workers through the president’s proposed pay freeze. Absent congressional action, the president has the authority to set an employee pay raise, or in this case, freeze federal pay. We must spur our legislators to do what is right and urge them to set a pay raise through the appropriations process. Contact your legislators today and stand for the federal community.”

And to continue, here is more from the NARFE Legislative Hotline, dated 3/9/18:

*Lawmakers are already beginning to speak out on the issue, with **Sen. James Lankford, R-OK**, chairman of the Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs and Federal Management, saying after a recent hearing, as reported by GovExec, that he doesn’t believe a pay freeze “gains us anything.” Lankford followed up that statement by noting that the pay freeze could hurt federal recruiting efforts.*

Federal workers experienced a three-year pay freeze in 2011-2013, setting the federal community behind and increasing the gap between public- and private-sector pay. This three-year freeze cost federal employees \$98 billion over 10 years in lost wages. An additional pay freeze would cost the federal community billions more and impact annuity calculations for those nearing retirement.

MARCH IS “PAC MONTH”

*Every two years, in March, a new NARFE-PAC pin is issued. Last year, when the new pins arrived, most of you purchased your new pin. It said 2017-2018 on it, and of course that means no new pins will be issued until March 2019. **But we still observe March as Pac Month.** It’s still vitally important to support the campaigns of those in Congress who are sympathetic to our NARFE causes. For that reason, when you come to the March 23rd meeting you will find a special container to receive your NARFE-PAC contribution of **any amount.** You will receive a receipt for any donation over \$3.00. If you don’t have a pin yet, you may purchase one for \$25. **Wear your 2017-2018 pin with pride, and continue to support NARFE-PAC!***

KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES FORUM

At our March chapter board meeting, we set the date for our “Know Your Candidates” **Forum**. **This year the Forum is set for Friday, August 17.** The event will be an indoor picnic with local, county, state and national candidates appearing who will be on the ballot in November 2018. You will hear where they stand on the issues and have the opportunity to visit with them and make an informed decision when you go to the polls. The forum will be held in the Mid-Del area, and the exact location will be announced in the near future. Mark your calendars now for this event. You won’t want to miss it.

ALZHEIMER'S REPORT: By Norma Baxter, Assistant to Dorothy Branson

STAMP OUT ALZHEIMER'S !

What excitement I had when I saw the new **first class, semipostal, 65-cent stamp supporting Alzheimer's research**. It came out November 30, 2017, but I just became aware. What an inventive way to support such a demeaning disease.

I ask you, please, when you buy stamps, to consider giving the extra cost to support Alzheimer's. A first class stamp is 50 cents, and these stamps are 65 cents, so every time you buy a stamp, 15 cents goes to Alzheimer's Research. They are sold by the sheet: 20 for \$13, 10 for \$6.50 and 4 for \$2.60. Oh, by the way, encourage your family and friends to participate.

Below are some interesting facts about the stamp:

The U.S. Postal Service is proud to issue this semipostal stamp that helps raise funds to fight Alzheimer's disease. As one of the top ten leading causes of death in the United States, Alzheimer's destroys the minds of the people affected by it and poses enormous challenges for family members and caregivers. Today, Americans are increasingly committed to finding ways to prevent, treat, and someday stop this heartbreaking disease.

The artwork for this stamp is an illustration that first appeared on the 42-cent Alzheimer's Awareness stamp issued in 2008. It shows an elderly woman in profile with a caring hand on her shoulder, with the suggestion of sunlight behind her and clouds in front of and below her. On the 2008 stamp, she was facing left, the artwork for this stamp shows her facing right.

The stamps will be displayed at the March 23rd luncheon meeting. A limited number will be for sale there for 65 cents each. Remember when you stamp your letter, you are not only making a 15-cent donation, you are spreading awareness for this great cause.

SUNSHINE REPORT: By Joyce Woodring and Helen Cannefax

If you know of anyone who is ill or has passed away, contact your SUNSHINE LADIES, so we can send cards and/or acknowledge the loss of a loved one. Please call us with your Birthday or Anniversary date and particulars. Call Joyce Woodring at 602-8043 or Helen Cannefax at 259-9979.

Cards sent in February, 2018:

Get Well – Dorothy Branson, Dale & Billie West, Bill Mullins, Linda Case, JoAnn & Betty Brannan, and Rosie Pettett.

Thinking of You – Bob Oltmanns, Virginia Douthitt, and James Livingston.

Sympathy – Family of Roy Bray; Delores Poche' for loss of her Brother; Family of Mary Broome, 98.

National Active & Retired Federal Employees Association
Midwest City/Del City
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*Best Wishes
For a Blest and Joyful
Easter Season!*

MARCH MEETING DETAILS

PROGRAM: Senator Ron Sharp, R, serving parts of eastern Oklahoma County and the Shawnee area, will speak on state issues, particularly those facing public education.

WHEN: Friday, March 23, 2018

TIME: 11:30 a.m.

WHERE: Twin Hills Golf & Country Club

LOCATION: 3401 N. E. 36th St. (From Sooner Rd. travel west on N. E. 36th St., 1.8 miles. Turn into the gate on the north side of 36th St. and drive to the parking lot.)

Handicapped parking spots are near the entrance. The meeting room is on the second floor. There is a nice large elevator to the right of the main doors inside the building.

Drive carefully and slowly in Forest Park. The local police watch for speeders.

MENU: Hot buffet with two meats, two vegetables, salad bar, desserts, coffee and iced tea. Cost is \$13 per person.

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED: You will be contacted by one of our "Calling Committee" Volunteers. Be ready to give them a "yes" or "no" concerning your reservation. If you want to make a reservation or if you have to cancel, call Helen Cannefax at 259-9979 by NOON on Wednesday, before meetings (March 21, 2018). If you make a reservation and do not attend or cancel on time, please send payment to Treasurer Ken Dungan, P. O. Box 10583, Oklahoma City, OK 73140.

The National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE) is open for membership to all federal civilians who are current employees, retirees, former employees, spouses, surviving spouses of those eligible to join NARFE, and former spouses who are eligible for a federal or survivor annuity.